



Communication In and Out of Disaster

Disaster Behavioral Health Conference – June 6, 2023
The Regional Behavioral Health Coordinator Team

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Objectives

- Define what is meant by "good" communication.
- Learn how to apply principles of disaster response communication to non-disaster situations.
- Understand how personal challenges can impact professional interactions.
- Discuss the importance of good communication between leaders and teams.
- Engage in case study application of these principles.

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Some Facts for You – The Workforce Institute at UKG – Study of 3,400 people across 10 countries



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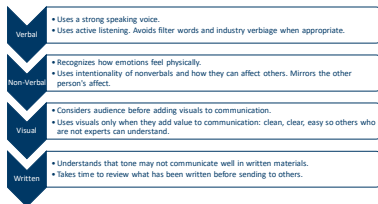
What Is Communication?

The process or act of exchanging, expressing, or conveying information and ideas through writing, speaking and gesturing.



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Types of Communication



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Throughout this presentation ...

- ... you will hear us use examples and terms that seem interchangeable. We mean to challenge you with the idea that these concepts do not work on their own – they work together to create effective communication.

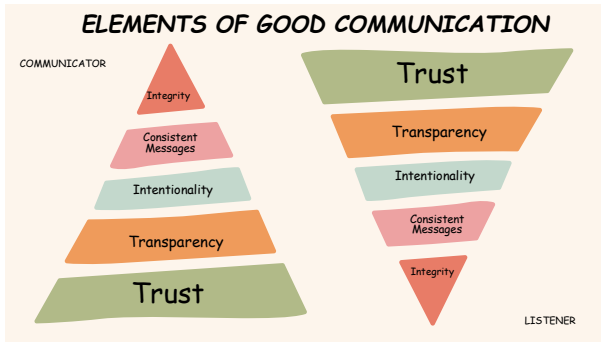


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Why Do We Start With Trust? (Fahkrudden, 2020)

- For the public (or your team) to act on warnings and follow guidance, it is essential that people perceive the source as trustworthy. (p. 4)
- Communicating uncertainty is challenging. Uncertainty exists in most, if not all, scientific information, especially information associated with natural hazards. (p.1)
- To communicate effectively, it is necessary to know what people think, feel and do about risk, and what makes it easy or difficult for them to take certain actions. (p.3)
- Understanding people's demographics, values and beliefs as well as their media consumption patterns and who they trust is also important. (p.3)

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(Gladieux, p.130)

- How managers build trust with their teams. They lead by example by:
 - Creating and supporting truthful, positive relationships – real feedback delivered with kindness, approaching and resolving conflict together.
 - Using good judgment - from subject-matter expertise
 - Being consistent – do what they say they will and do more than expected.
 - Practicing appropriate self-disclosure - communicate clear intentions, hopes, goals with their teams.
 - Speaking, thinking and writing from the "we" perspective rather than "I" and "you."
 - Apologizing when they make a mistake or let their team down.
 - Tending to their "self" so they can respond to their teams in helpful, healthy ways.

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Transparency

- The quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.
- Transparency = to say what you CAN say.
- Doesn't mean that you are outing others.
- Being vulnerable, yet professional.
- Giving others the opportunity to be heard.
- Example: Work team was told decisions have been made to no longer do parts of their job anymore. Nothing else was said. Leaving all kinds of questions and unknowns.



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Intentionality

- The fact of being deliberate or purposive.
- 6 ways to be intentional every day (LucemiConsulting.co.uk):
 - Be deliberate with your day.
 - Be clear on the result you want.
 - Be purposeful with your time
 - Be considered with your focus.
 - Be focused on your goals (e.g., SPR Skills).
 - Be mindful of your most important relationships.



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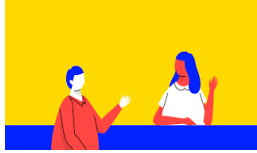
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The Basics of Intentional Communication

- Think before you speak.
- Commit to develop your self-awareness.
- Develop skill around your body language habits, especially tone of voice.
- Watch your words.
- Notice what you are feeling in all your communications.



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Consistent Messages

- Consistent Messages build TRUST because of the consistency, not the changing content of the messages.
- In and out of disaster the content is going to change due to the situations.
- Disaster response example: "We will give you updated information every hour on the hour." If we do that people are more likely to stay with us because we did what we said we were going to do (trust).
- Non-disaster response example: Manager to staff, "When I get updates, I will give them to you." When that is done, even if there isn't an update just yet, the staff will feel confident that they have as much information as possible (trust).

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Consistent logo



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You are the Logo

Carlson, NancyJ (She...
May Newsletter and other
Hello, Attached is our May

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Integrity

- Although integrity is at the top of the pyramid, it is assumed not to be foundational, but it is. We cannot assume that because people address the other elements of communication they will communicate with integrity.
- What do we mean by speaking with integrity = the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; the state of being whole and undivided.
- 4 values of integrity:
 - Sound judgment
 - Honesty
 - Dependability
 - Loyalty



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Principles of Disaster/Emergency Risk Communication (AL Dept of Public Health)

- This is a two-way process with speaker and listener.
 - Stop trying to allay panic.
 - Emphasize that there is a response process in place.
 - Avoid over-reassurance.
 - Acknowledge uncertainty.
 - Give people things to do.
 - Express wishes.



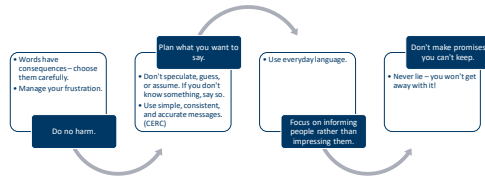
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Tips for the Effective Communicator (AL Dept of Public Health)



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What Gets in The Way of Effective Communication?



- Lack of trust and credibility. (Glik, p.3)
- People's responses to events that threaten their health and safety evoke a diverse array of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses. (Glik, p.4)

- Mental states in a crisis. People may feel:
 - Uncertainty – acknowledge it.
 - Fear, anxiety, dread – provide accurate information.
 - Hopelessness and helplessness – advise people to take constructive actions related to the crisis which can restore a sense of some control.
 - Denial – offer consistent message from multiple trusted sources.
 - Panic – continue to offer consistent message – appeal to sense of community to help each other. (CERC, p.5-7)

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Communication is a Two-Way Street. An Effective Speaker Needs an Effective Listener. What Makes a Good Listener?

- Mental Noise Theory – Listeners have difficulty processing information when they are:
 - upset,
 - angry,
 - fearful,
 - outraged,
 - under high stress,
 - involved in conflict,
 - feel high concern.
- Lack of trust impacts people's willingness to believe authority. Negative information is more believed than positive. (Glik, p.4)



- Listeners (team members) need to pay attention to our internal and external responses.
 - Manage your emotions.
 - Ask questions.
 - Develop trust.
 - When possible, support the leader.
 - When not possible, make your concerns known one-on-one.
 - Follow the chain of command.

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Final Warning

Remember to use this for yourself and to challenge your communication skills.



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Cognitive Distortions

Fortune Telling Assuming something bad will always happen. "No one will come to my party!" 	Minimizing Downplaying the importance of any successes. "My award doesn't mean much to me." 	Catastrophizing Thinking the worst situation will happen. "I'm definitely going to fail!" 	Self-Blaming Blaming yourself if anything goes wrong. "It's all my fault!" 
Mind Reading Assuming you know what someone else is thinking. "I definitely know my boss doesn't like me." 	Mental Filtering Hyper-focusing on a negative detail of a situation. "It's raining outside! My party is ruined!" 	Should & Must Believing things can only be a certain way. "I should always be perfect no matter what." 	Labeling Applying a negative label to yourself. "I'm such a loser, no one likes me!" 

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Case Study

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Questions



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Would you like this presentation for your group?

This presentation is available for a 90-minute interactive training. We will be offering this training on June 13th from 9-10:30 am. Register on MNTrain.org.

All our trainings are available for presentation to your team/county/region. Please contact your RBHC if you have questions or would like to schedule a training.

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Resources

- AL Dept of Public Health Satellite Conference (November 15, 2005), *Facing Fear: Crisis Communication and Disaster Behavioral Health*.
- CERC (Crisis + Emergency Risk Communication). (2019 Update). *Psychology of a crisis*. US Department of Health and Human Services: CDC.
- Fakhruddin, B., Clark, H., Robinson, L. & Hieber-Girardet, L. (2020). *Should I stay or should I go now? Why risk communication is the critical component in disaster risk reduction*. *Progress in Disaster Science* (8), 1-4.
- Gladieux, M. (2022) *Communicate with courage: Taking risks to overcome the four hidden challenges*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Glik, D. (2007) Risk communication for public health emergencies. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 28, 33-54.
- Mayhorn, C. & McLaughlin, A. (2012) Warning the world of extreme events: A global perspective on risk communication for natural and technological disaster. *Safety Science*.

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Thank You!



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